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SUBJECT: THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING BANGLA: QUICK BANGLA TRANSLATION
BRINGS PRESIDENT'S RAMADAN MESSAGE TO MILLIONS

REF: DHAKA 579

¶1. Summary: President Obama's Ramadan message received extensive coverage in the local media. The White House's Bangla translation ensured timely dissemination of the message immediately before the start of Ramadan. Seven local television stations broadcasting to 40 percent of Bangladesh's 150 million-plus citizens aired news reports about the President's message. In addition, 11 newspapers with a combined daily readership of three million delivered the message. As was the case for the President's Cairo speech (reftel), President Obama's Ramadan message reverberated in this moderate, Muslim-majority nation. Amplifying the President's message in Bangla directly to the world's fourth most populous Muslim nation is one of the most effective ways imaginable to advance key bilateral and multilateral goals. End summary.

Bangla in Broadcast

¶2. The President's Ramadan message reached Dhaka after the beginning of Bangladesh's weekend. However, since the White House had translated the message in Bangla, the Embassy was able to quickly disseminate the message widely to the media. All major newspapers and television stations received copies of the President's remarks, in English and Bangla, as well as links to White House website for video imagery. That day, seven cable/satellite channels broadcast all or portions of the President's message during their daily news programs. We estimate that about 40 percent of the population, approximately 60 million people, had access to these news broadcasts.

Bangla in Print

¶3. In addition to television, 11 major daily newspapers published the message as news in their August 23 editions. The combined circulation of those papers is over 1.1 million copies per day. As each copy is generally read by 3-4 people, we project the newspaper articles reached at least 3 million people. Print media plays a particularly important role in Bangladesh. Mission Dhaka translates material into Bangla extensively for placement. White House translation accelerated the process significantly and broadened U.S. reach to Bangla speakers outside Bangladesh.

Bangla in New Media

¶4. Besides traditional media, the Embassy quickly posted the message, along with links to other Ramadan material from America.gov, on the Embassy's website and new Facebook (www.facebook.com/bangladesh.usembassy) pages. The website receives between 3,000-4,000 hits per day. Our Facebook page, though only launched three weeks ago, already has more than 400 fans. Despite low overall internet penetration, new media play an important role in informing the views of decision makers in Bangladesh, who relay

these via other media. To date, all the comments on the Facebook page are positive.

Comment

15. President Obama is rock-star popular in Bangladesh. The wide broadcast and publication of his Ramadan message reflects this, a trend we expect to continue and offer a powerful channel for the U.S. to reach Bangladeshis. As important as the President's message itself was the immediate release of a Bangla translation, a language spoken by more than 140 million Muslims in Bangladesh and 230 million worldwide. In reaching millions of Bangladeshis, the President's message demonstrated that the United States is truly interested in building bonds with Muslims around the world. We hope that all Washington agencies will continue to recognize that Bangla should be one of the standard languages for U.S. messages geared towards the Muslim world.

MORIARTY